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JAPANESE WHALING

In The Bonin Island Area

(a preliminary report)

JAPANESE WHALING IN THE BONIN ISLAND AREA
(A Preliminary Report)

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JAPANESE WHALING IN THE BONIN ISLAND AREA *
(A Preliminary Report)

SUMMARY

1. Whale fishery around the Bonin Islands since its development on a commercial basis in 1923 has augmented the food and oil supply of Japan.

2. Two Japanese companies, Nippon Marine Products Co, Ltd, (Nippon Suisan KK) and Ocean Fishing Co, Ltd, (Taiyo Gyogyo KK), exploited the whale resources of the Bonin Islands. They operated small whaling fleets, and each established a land station where catches were processed. Products were brought back to Japan for disposition.

3. Operations in Bonin waters were minimized with the beginning of World War II in the Pacific; they had ceased by the time of the Japanese surrender in 1945.

4. On 30 November 1945, The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers authorized the Japanese to resume Bonin whaling operations from 1 Dec 45-31 Mar 46. A month's extension was granted in March 1946 to enable the Japanese to take full advantage of the whaling season. Operations commenced in February and were concluded in mid-April 1946. During this season 113 whales were caught despite limited equipment and a relatively short operation. The catch yielded whale products valued at approximately ¥7,000,000.

* This report describes whaling in the neighborhood of the Bonin Islands. Although this area accounted for only 10-15% of the past production of the Japanese coastal whaling, it has received special attention because it was necessary to extend the authorized Japanese fishing area to allow for 1946 whaling in the Bonin region. A general report covering all aspects of the Japanese whaling industry, including the Antarctic operations, is being prepared by the Fisheries Division.

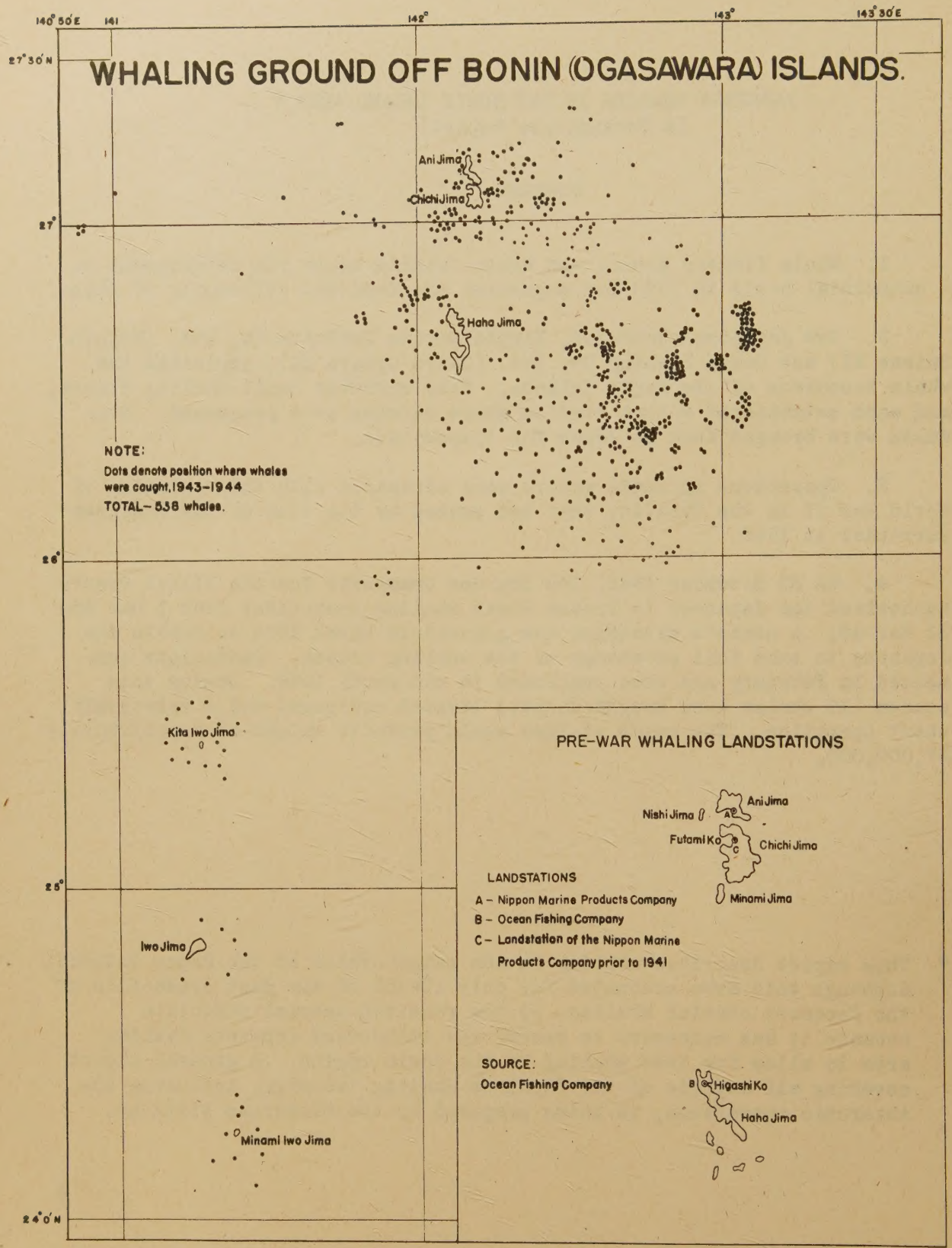

WHALING GROUND OFF BONIN (OGASAWARA) ISLANDS.
140° 30'E
141
142°
143°
143° 30'E
27° 30'N
27°
26°
25°
24° 0'N
Ani Jima
Chichi Jima
Haha Jima
Kita Iwo Jima
Iwo Jima
Minami Iwo Jima
NOTE:
Dots denote position where whales were caught, 1943–1944
TOTAL– 538 whales.
PRE-WAR WHALING LANDSTATIONS
Ani Jima
Nishi Jima
Futami Ko
Chichi Jima
Minami Jima
LANDSTATIONS
A – Nippon Marine Products Company
B – Ocean Fishing Company
C – Landstation of the Nippon Marine Products Company prior to 1941
SOURCE:
Ocean Fishing Company
Higashi Ko
Haha Jima

Figure 1

JAPANESE WHALING IN THE BONIN ISLAND AREA [1]
(A Preliminary Report)

A. Introduction

1. The Bonin (Ogasawara) and Volcano (Kazan) Islands, 520 miles southwest of Japan, have been a part of the Japanese whaling industry for 23 years. Waters surrounding these islands (Figures 1 and 2) are excellent winter whaling grounds, and Japan's exploitation of the area had attained large proportions in the period before December 1941.

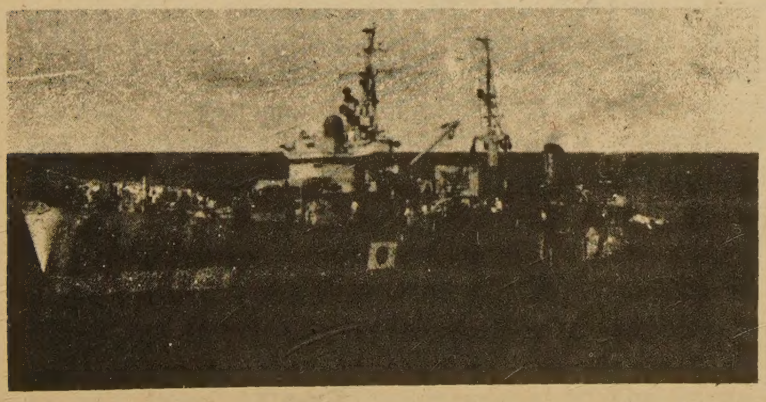
B. Japanese Prewar Whaling Activities Around the Bonin Islands

1. History and Development

a. The Japanese whaling industry began many centuries ago. Whaling in the Bonin Islands area, however, is a relatively recent development. In 1922 a Japanese whaling concern initiated experiments to determine the potentiality of the Bonin waters as whaling grounds. Trials were productive, and actual operations on a commercial scale began late in 1923.

2. Whaling Season

a. Although whaling is conducted throughout the year in Japanese coastal waters, operations in the Bonin area (Figures 1 and 2) are limited to the period from December until April or May. The peak is reached in March and April; catches decline rapidly thereafter. The humpback, sei, and sperm species of whale are most commonly captured, but finback and blue whales are occasionally caught. The most productive area is directly east of Hahajima.



The mother ship, Transport #19

1/ This report (No. 73) was prepared by Mr. Bell M. Shimada, Fisheries Division, Natural Resources Section, General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Tokyo, April 1947. (Reproduced by permission of the Civil Affairs Division, War Department).

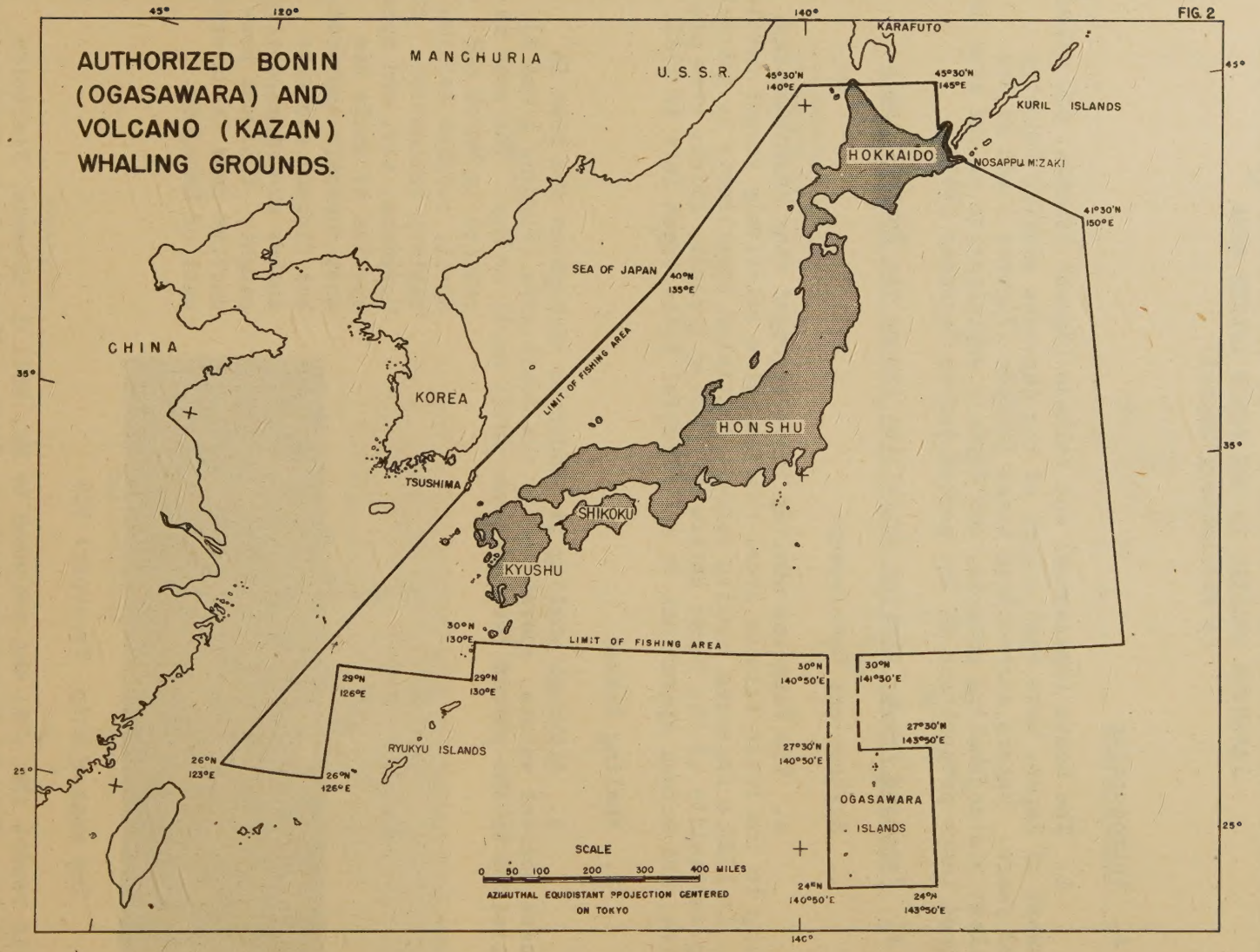
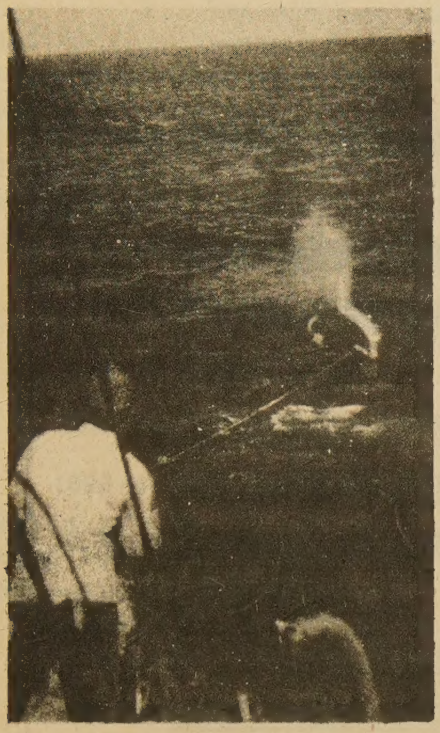


FIG. 2
AUTHORIZED BONIN (OGASAWARA) AND VOLCANO (KAZAN) WHALING GROUNDS.
MANCHURIA
U. S. S. R.
KARAFUTO
KURIL ISLANDS
HOKKAIDO
NOSAPPU MIZAKI
45°30'N 140°E
45°30'N 145°E
41°30'N 150°E
SEA OF JAPAN
40°N 135°E
CHINA
KOREA
LIMIT OF FISHING AREA
HONSHU
TSUSHIMA
SHIKOKU
KYUSHU
30°N 130°E
LIMIT OF FISHING AREA
29°N 126°E
29°N 130°E
30°N 140°50'E
30°N 141°30'E
27°30'N 143°50'E
27°30'N 140°50'E
RYUKYU ISLANDS
26°N 123°E
26°N 126°E
OGASAWARA ISLANDS
SCALE
0 50 100 200 300 400 MILES
AZIMUTHAL EQUIDISTANT PROJECTION CENTERED ON TOKYO
24°N 140°50'E
24°N 143°50'E
45°
120°
140°
35°
25°

Figure 2



A harpooned sei whale struggling to escape

3. Japanese Whaling Concerns

a. Whaling in Bonin waters has always been shared by two Japanese fishing companies. The Nippon Marine Products Co, originally known as the Toyo Whaling Co, was the first to exploit whale resources in this area (1923). The Ocean Fishing Co, then known as the Hayashikane Co, entered the field in 1937. To eliminate competition and to insure friendly inter-company relations, the two firms observed an agreement whereby the Toyo Whaling Co exploited waters around Chichijima, and the Hayashikane Co operated in the area surrounding Hahajima. A land station was established on each of these islands by the respective operating company, and catches were processed there (Figure 1). The whale meat, oil, bone meal, and blubber were shipped to Japan for marketing. The combined fleet operated by these companies during 1941 consisted of only seven vessels. As land stations were able to process all catches, no factory ships were employed.

4. Number of Whales Captured

a. Prior to 1936 whale catches in the Bonin Island area were less than one-half of those produced in recent years. Not until the entry of the Hayashikane Co into commercial activities in 1939 did catches increase significantly (Table 1). This company was licensed in 1937 but did not actively participate in whaling until April 1938 when its land station at Hahajima was completed. Its earlier operations were conducted only on a trial basis. From 1923 through 1938, when only one company was active, the average annual catch was 62 whales. In subsequent years catches increased substantially, averaging 228 whales annually from 1939 through 1941 (Figure 3).

C. The War Years 1941-1945

1. With the outbreak of hostilities in December 1941, Bonin whaling operations dropped sharply (Table 1). The land station owned by the Nippon Marine Products Co at Futami-ko on Chichijima was transferred to Anijima. All whaling vessels of the Ocean Fishing Co were commandeered by the Japanese navy. With such limitations upon the whaling industry, catches decreased drastically. During the 1941-1942 season only 68 whales were landed. During the following year the Ocean Fishing Co replaced its losses with other ships, and operations once more returned to normal. Stimulated by military and domestic demands, whale catches in 1943 and 1944 surpassed all previous records.

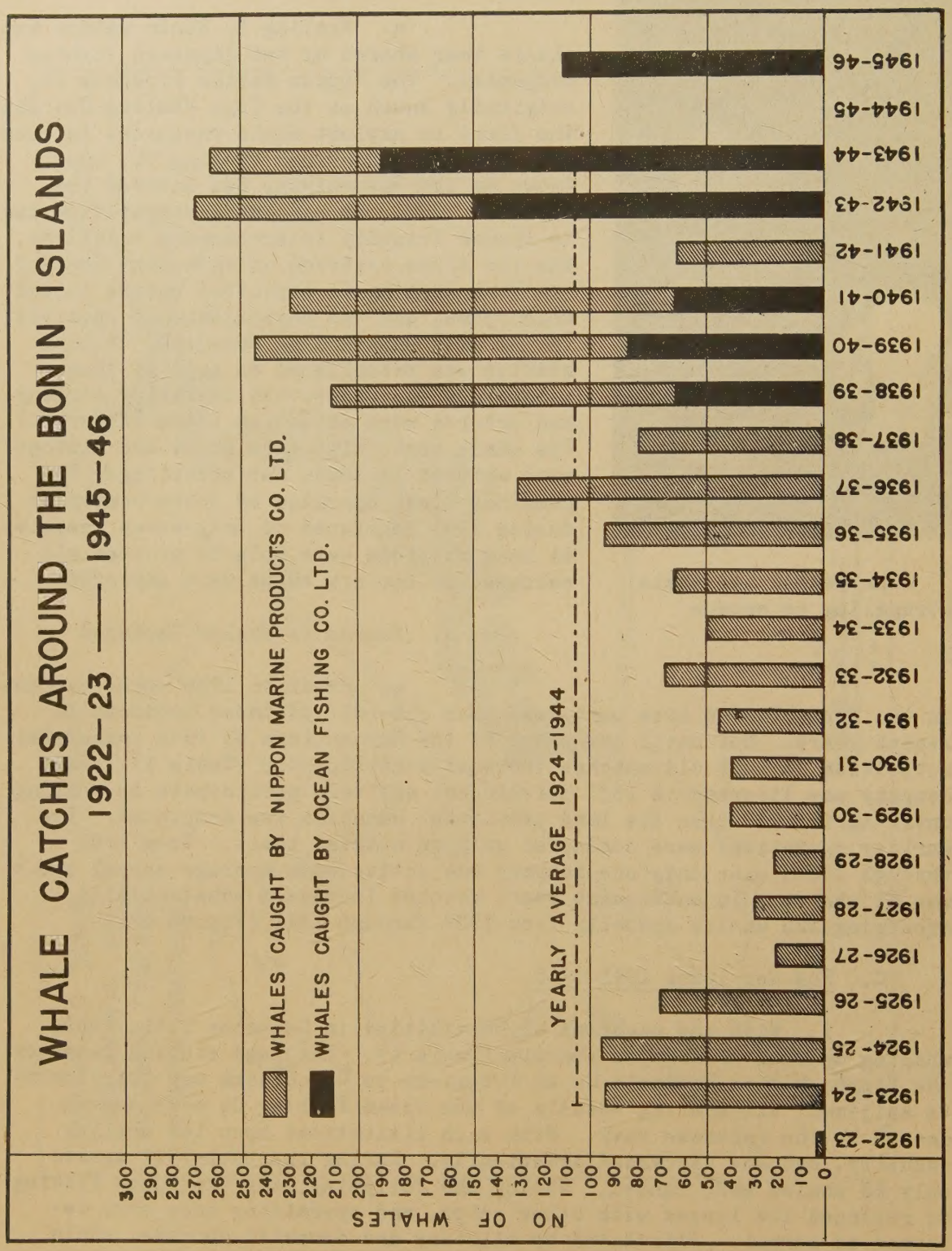

WHALE CATCHES AROUND THE BONIN ISLANDS
1922–23 —— 1945–46
WHALES CAUGHT BY NIPPON MARINE PRODUCTS CO. LTD.
WHALES CAUGHT BY OCEAN FISHING CO. LTD.
YEARLY AVERAGE 1924-1944
NO OF WHALES
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
110
120
130
140
150
160
170
180
190
200
210
220
230
240
250
260
270
280
290
300
1922-23
1923-24
1924-25
1925-26
1926-27
1927-28
1928-29
1929-30
1930-31
1931-32
1932-33
1933-34
1934-35
1935-36
1936-37
1937-38
1938-39
1939-40
1940-41
1941-42
1942-43
1943-44
1944-45
1945-46

Figure 3

2. The whaling industry contributed to the Japanese war effort by fulfilling diverse military and civilian requirements. Whale oil normally used for making soap was diverted to the manufacture of munitions and high-grade lubricating oil. Meat and blubber augmented the national food supply. By-products, such as bone and hide, were used as fertilizer and leather. The following tabulation compares the production of whale meat, oil, and by-products from the Bonin Islands in 1943 and 1944 with that of whaling grounds around the four main islands of Japan:

WHALING SEASON 1942-1943

Whaling Grounds	Number of Whales	Meat (metric tons)	Oil (metric tons)	By-Products (metric tons)
Bonin Islands	270	2,225	375	648
Home Island whaling grounds	1,221	17,378	1,819	8,871
Bonin Islands as percent of home island whaling	18.1	11.4	17.1	6.8

WHALING SEASON 1943-1944

Bonin Islands	268	2,912	311	355
Home Island whaling grounds	1,901	18,069	3,749	6,605
Bonin Islands as percent of home island whaling	12.4	13.9	7.7	5.1

Source: Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Dragging aboard a sperm whale. The first flensing knives have already been inserted.

3. The fall of Saipan in June 1944 and the American invasion of Iwo Jima in February 1945 prevented further Japanese whaling in Bonin waters.

D. Negotiations Leading to Authorization of Japanese Whaling Around the Bonin Islands

1. The Bonin Islands are outside the area in which the Japanese were authorized to fish during the immediate post-war period (Appendix 1) Steps for resuming whaling around the Bonin and Volcano Islands were initiated by the Japanese government 8 November 1945 in a petition to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. The approval requested was to apply from 1 Nov 45 to 31 May 46.

Initial flensing operation after a humpback whale has been dragged aboard the mother ship.

2. Petitions for whaling bases at Takinoura on Anijima and at Higashidai Kitamura on Hahajima were disapproved. The Japanese government then indicated that a base of operations could be established at Hachijojima, an island 425 miles northwest of the Bonins and within the authorized fishing zone. However, this island was considered too distant from the whaling grounds to be practical as a whaling base.

3. Japan had participated in various international whaling conferences but had not ratified any of the conventions or agreements. By order of the Supreme Commander 8 November 1945, the Japanese whaling industry was bound by the provisions prescribed in these agreements (Appendix II).

4. As means of alleviating the critical food shortage in Japan the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers approved resumption of Japanese whaling in the Bonin Islands for one season on 30 November 1945 (Appendix III). Salient provisions of the directive were:

a. Japanese whaling operations were permitted in the area surrounding the Bonin (Ogasawara) and Kazan islands between 24° and 27° 30' North Latitude and between 140° 50' and 143° 50' East Longitude from 1 December 1945 to 31 March 1946, inclusive (Figure 2)

b. No precedent was established for extension of whaling or fishing privileges in any areas outside those authorized previously, or for any subsequent period.

c. Japanese whaling vessels were not to enter any harbor on any of the Ogasawara (Bonin) or Kazan (Volcano) islands, and no personnel from such vessels were to land on or have contact with these islands.

d. Access to the area was to be made through the waters between 30° and 27° 30' North Latitude and between 140° 50' and 141° 50' East Longitude.

5. Repeated attempts were made by the Japanese to secure land bases in the Bonin Islands. Establishment of such bases was, however, prohibited by a previous directive (Appendix III). The Ocean Fishing Co submitted a petition 16 December 1945 requesting use of harbors in the Bonin Islands for processing whales and for replenishing ship provisions. The request was denied (Appendix IV). A month later, 8 January 1946, the Japanese Government again sought permission to use the harbors of Takinoura on Anijima and Higashizake Minato on Hahajima for whaling bases. Consideration was requested on the basis that 40 hours are required to tow whale carcasses to Torishima, the nearest base in authorized waters. The requests were denied, and the Japanese were reminded that the International Whaling Conventions requires complete disposal of whales within 36 hours after capture.

Whale aboard ship

6. On 21 March 1946 the Japanese requested extension of the whaling period until 30 April 1946. This request was based on several considerations:

A 50-foot sperm whale aboard the mother ship

(a) operations had been unavoidably delayed in getting under way; (b) the original termination date of 31 March would end the operations at a very productive time. The extension was granted 24 March 1946 (Appendix V). The Bonin operations ceased 18 April 1946, two weeks before the season expired, for reasons discussed in the following section (E-5).

E. Summary of Bonin Whaling Operations Under Allied Supervision, 1945-46

1. When permission was granted the Japanese to resume whaling around the Bonin Islands, two companies, the Nippon Marine Products Co (Nippon Suisan KK) and the Ocean Fishing Co (Taiyo Gyogyo KK), indicated that they would participate. The Nippon Marine Products Co, however, was unable to complete preparations in time for the season and consequently shelved its plans.

2. With land stations in the Bonin Islands forbidden, the Ocean Fishing Co found it necessary to obtain a whaling factory ship in order to process its whale catches. All large Japanese factory ships, however, had been sunk during the war. This increased the difficulties of assembling a whaling fleet. When a former repatriation ship of 1,500 gross tons was obtained by the company, authorization was secured from Shipping Control Administration of Japan for this ship to operate as part of the 10-vessel whaling fleet (Table 2).

3. The Bonin whaling operation commenced 24 February 1946 when six whaling vessels of the Ocean Fishing Co left Shimonoseki, Japan, for the whaling grounds. Actual operations began 1 March 1946. The fleet was augmented by the subsequent arrival of other ships. During March 59 whales were captured.

WHALES CAUGHT DURING MARCH 1946 BONIN WHALING OPERATIONS

Species	Number of Whales
Sperm whales	39
Sei whales	10
Humpback whales	10
TOTAL	59

Note: See Figure 4 for locality of whales captured.

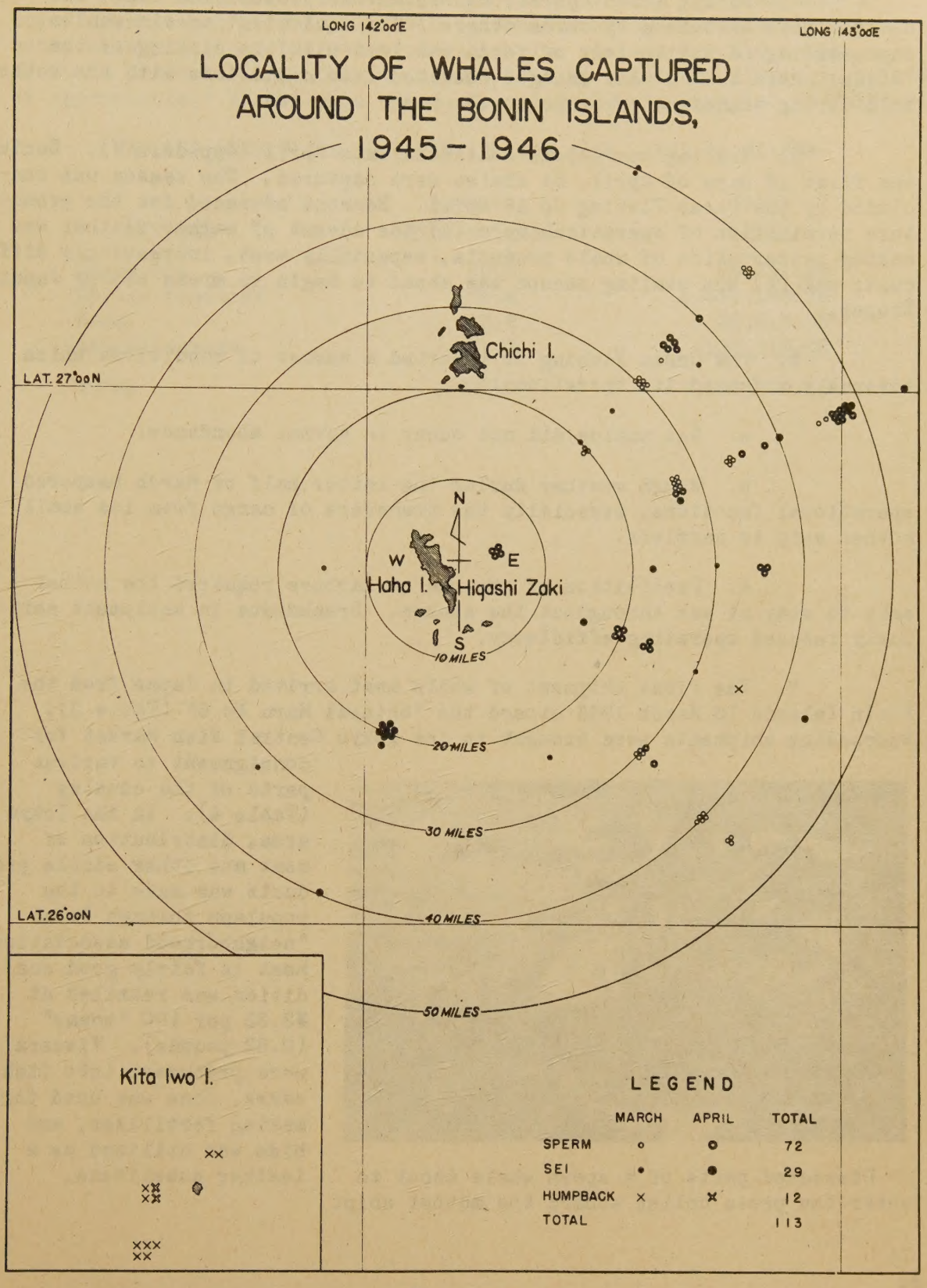

LONG 142°00'E
LONG 143°00E
LOCALITY OF WHALES CAPTURED AROUND THE BONIN ISLANDS, 1945 – 1946
Chichi I.
LAT. 27°00N
N
W
E
S
Haha I.
Higashi Zaki
10 MILES
20 MILES
30 MILES
40 MILES
50 MILES
LAT. 26°00N
Kita Iwo I.
LEGEND
MARCH
APRIL
TOTAL
SPERM
72
SEI
29
HUMPBACK
12
TOTAL
113

Figure 4

4. During March operations one carrier vessel was sunk, and damages were sustained by three others. The equivalent of six whales, representing 46 metric tons of food, was lost with the sinking of the "Shinsei Maru No 3". All damages resulted from collisions with the mother ship during transfers of cargo in the rough open sea.

5. Whaling operations continued into April (Appendix V). During the first 18 days of April, 54 whales were captured. The season was concluded by the Ocean Fishing Co 18 April. Reasons advanced for the premature termination of operations were (a) the advent of warmer weather was making preservation of whale products, especially meat, increasingly difficult; and (b) the whaling season was about to begin in areas nearer Japan Proper.

6. The Ocean Fishing Co reported a number of conditions which adversely affected its operations:

a. Sei whales did not occur in normal abundance.

b. Rough weather during the latter half of March hampered operational functions, especially the transfers of cargo from its small mother ship to carriers.

c. Prohibition of the use of harbors required the mother ship to stay at sea throughout the season. Breakdowns in equipment seriously reduced operating efficiency.

7. The first shipment of whale meat arrived in Japan from the Bonin Islands 13 March 1946 aboard the "Shinsei Maru No 6" (Table 3). Succeeding shipments were brought to the Tokyo Central Fish Market for consignment to various parts of the country (Table 4). In the Tokyo area, distribution of meat and other edible products was made to the populace through local "neighborhood associations". Meat in fairly good condition was retailed at ¥3.33 per 100 "momme" (0.82 pounds). Viscera were processed into fish cakes, bone was used for making fertilizer, and hide was utilized as a leather substitute.

Dissected parts of a sperm whale about to enter the press boiler aboard the mother ship.

8. Considering the handicaps of inadequate equipment and a brief operational period, the 1945-46 Bonin whaling operations produced a satisfactory yield. The catch of 113 whales yielded 1,005.4 metric tons of whale products (including 46 metric tons lost through sinking), valued at approximately ¥7,000,000. Products and value are reported as follows:

WHALING OPERATIONS IN BONIN ISLANDS AREA, 1945-46 SEASON

Product	Amount (metric tons)	Value (yen)
Sperm oil	20.0	26,291.80
Edible products	879.4	6,840,162.75
Bone	73.8	29,513.85
Miscellaneous	32.2	130,410.00
TOTAL	1,005.4	7,026,378.40

TABLE 1. - MONTHLY WHALE CATCHES FOR THE BONIN ISLANDS, 1922-46

Season	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Total
1922-23	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
1923-24	0	3	9	29	28	17	8	94
1924-25	0	0	21	17	28	23	6	95
1925-26	0	0	12	19	20	12	7	70
1926-27	0	0	5	5	9	2	0	21
1927-28	0	5	8	9	4	4	0	30
1928-29	2	0	6	6	8	0	0	22
1929-30	0	14	18	3	5	0	0	40
1930-31	0	1	16	12	11	0	0	40
1931-32	0	5	16	13	11	0	0	45
1932-33	0	1	26	25	16	0	0	68
1933-34	0	11	10	16	9	4	0	50
1934-35	1	13	10	16	23	1	0	64
1935-36	0	5	11	22	28	25	2	93
1936-37	0	17	18	36	42	18	0	131
1937-38	0	1	23	11	16	22	6	79
1938-39	0	3	44	67	55	34	8	211
1939-40	0	0	9	40	141	50	4	244
1940-41	0	0	7	72	52	93	5	229
1941-42	0	0	20	37	6	0	0	63
1942-43	0	0	19	36	115	82	18	270
1943-44	0	0	11	32	158	67	0	268
1944-45	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1945-46	0	0	0	0	59	54	0	113
TOTAL	3	82	319	523	844	508	64	2,343

Source: Ocean Fishing Co

TABLE 2. - BONIN WHALING FLEET OF THE OCEAN FISHING CO 1945-46

Designation	Type of Vessel	Tonnage
Transport #19	Mother ship	1,500.00 gross tons
Fumi Maru	Whaler	359.74 gross tons
Seki Maru #2	Whaler	359.74 gross tons
Banshu Maru #35	Carrier	993.45 gross tons
Shinsei Maru	Carrier	73.96 gross tons
Shinsei Maru #3 a/	Carrier	73.96 gross tons
Shinsei Maru #6	Carrier	80.43 gross tons
Shinsei Maru #37	Carrier	74.48 gross tons
Shinsei Maru #38	Carrier	85.65 gross tons
Shinsei Maru #76	Carrier	79.93 gross tons

a/ Sunk during course of operations
Source: Ocean Fishing Co

TABLE 3. - RECEIPTS OF BONIN ISLAND WHALE PRODUCTS 1945-46 (metric tons)

Date of Arrival	Unloading Point	Vessel Designation	Whale Products unloaded				
			Meat	Blubber	Entrails	Other a/	Total
13 March 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Shinsei Maru #6	29.11	22.00	4.50	0.32	55.94
19 March 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Shinsei Maru #1	13.56	18.54	4.30	3.93	40.34
28 March 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Banshu Maru #35	95.80	131.55	24.70	31.87	283.92
6 April 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Shinsei Maru #6	20.80	26.26	4.74	2.80	54.60
6 April 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Shinsei Maru #38	17.61	26.59	4.20	3.68	52.08
11 April 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Shinsei Maru #76	29.35	21.66	5.15	3.46	59.62
13 April 1946	Tokyo Shibaura Market	Shinsei Maru #37	27.25	9.96	4.09	6.73	48.03
21 April 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Transport #19	4.50	1.39	0.00	0.78	6.67
21 April 1946	Tokyo Central Market	Banshu Maru #35	116.13	134.50	22.73	84.60	357.96
	TOTAL		354.13	392.45	74.41	138.17	959.16

a/ "Other" includes:

Sperm oil	19.5 metric tons	Bristles	0.1 metric tons
Bone	73.8 metric tons	Skin	5.5 metric tons
Liver	6.0 metric tons	Muscle	1.4 metric tons
Gelatinous material	30.8 metric tons	Miscellaneous	1.1 metric tons

Source: Ocean Fishing Co

TABLE 4. - DISPOSITION OF 1945-46 SEASON BONIN ISLAND WHALE PRODUCTS (metric tons)

Shipment	Total Cargo Unloaded	Points of Consignment									
		Tokyo	Kanagawa	Osaka	Kobe	Kyoto	Ayukawa Station	Miyagi	Shizuoka	Shimonoseki	Refrigerated a/
13 March 1946	55.94	0.00	24.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	31.66
19 March 1946	40.34	32.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.23
28 March 1946	283.92	166.13	14.84	13.09	9.57	8.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	71.45
6 April 1946	54.60	48.55	0.00	1.45	0.00	0.00	2.46	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.14
6 April 1946	52.08	12.70	0.00	22.49	10.10	0.00	3.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.61
11 April 1946	59.62	38.08	0.00	8.92	0.00	7.79	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.83
13 April 1946	48.03	25.16	0.00	0.00	14.13	0.00	6.36	0.86	0.00	0.00	1.52
21 April 1946	6.67	6.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
21 April 1946	357.96	122.26	8.15	58.38	42.63	20.57	1.30	20.44	9.87	8.25	66.11
TOTAL	959.16	451.66	47.27	104.33	76.43	37.20	13.30	21.30	9.87	8.25	189.55

a/ Refrigerated products were distributed as follows:
Tokyo 35.009 metric tons Kobe 32.250 metric tons Aomori 6.856 metric tons Miyagi 20.831 metric tons
Osaka 26.580 metric tons Kyoto 7.589 metric tons Ayukawa 60.493 metric tons
Source: Ocean Fishing Co